

keepin' it REAL

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Program developers or their agents provided the Model Program information below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The *keepin' it REAL* (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) program is a video-enhanced intervention that uses a culturally grounded resiliency model that incorporates traditional ethnic values and practices that protect against drug use. A school-based prevention program originally designed for middle-school students, REAL has been implemented with youth 10 through 17 years of age. NREPP* reviewed evaluations of studies conducted with 8th graders. (The curriculum was implemented in 7th grade and continued, via a booster series, in 8th grade.)

keepin' it REAL is based on previous work that demonstrates that teaching communication and life skills can combat negative peers and other influences. *keepin' it REAL* extends resistance- and life-skills models by using a culturally-based narrative and performance framework to:

- Enhance anti-drug norms and attitudes
- Facilitate the development of risk assessment, decisionmaking, and resistance skills

keepin' it REAL utilizes a 10-lesson classroom curriculum accompanied by a collection of five videos that demonstrate resistance strategies and illustrate the skills taught in the lessons.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND:

keepin' it REAL developers perceived the need to develop and test culturally specific prevention interventions that would incorporate the already-present cultural strengths represented in the country's ethnically and racially diverse school populations.

A decade of research funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Grant No. 5 RO1 DA05629-07), led to development of *keepin' it REAL*. Researchers combined narrative theory with the focus theory of norms and implemented an experimental design with 24 treatment schools and 11 control schools. The REAL strategies and skills are embedded in everyday scenarios of Mexican American, African American, and White youth of the Southwest and are transferable to many situations in life.

*National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices



RECOGNITION

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Model Program

IOM CLASSIFICATION

UNIVERSAL, SELECTIVE

The *REAL* curriculum meets or exceeds the criteria for Universal, Selective, and Indicated populations. Since the original implementation, replication studies and new implementation models have been conducted at public school sites with 8th grade and 6th grades, in community settings with multiage youth groups, and in agency settings serving both selective and indicated population youth ranging from 10 through 17 years of age.

INTERVENTION TYPE

SCHOOL-BASED

keepin' it REAL is a school-based prevention program designed for elementary, middle, and early high school students 10 through 17 years of age. The curriculum is based on previous work that demonstrates that teaching communication and life skills can combat negative peers and other influences.

CONTENT FOCUS

ALCOHOL, ILLEGAL DRUGS

The program is designed to intervene with students before they actively begin to participate in risky behaviors such as experimentations with alcohol and drugs or to assist students to reduce existing substance use. The curriculum teaches specific resistance skills applicable across a variety of risky situations.

INTERVENTIONS BY DOMAIN

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY

INDIVIDUAL

- In-school alcohol and drug education
- Curricula incorporating cultural heritage/mores along with culturally appropriate activities
- Life/social skills training, values clarification

PEER

- Peer resistance education

SCHOOL

- Changes in approaches to teaching and parent and community interactions
- Classroom substance abuse prevention/resistance education

COMMUNITY

- Education to alter perceptions of societal norms and expectations
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KEY PROGRAM APPROACHES/COMPONENTS

BOOSTER SESSIONS, CULTURE-BASED CURRICULA/ACTIVITIES, MEDIA/PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS, SKILL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION

BOOSTER SESSIONS

One monthly booster session during the 8 months after completing the classroom-based intervention is recommended.

CULTURE-BASED CURRICULA/ACTIVITIES

This program is a culturally grounded resiliency model that incorporates traditional ethnic values and practices that protect against drug use. Distinct Mexican American, African American, and multicultural versions of *keepin' it REAL* were developed so that students can recognize themselves in the prevention message and can see solutions that are sensitive to their unique cultural environments.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Using *REAL* strategies, students learn how to recognize risk, value their perceptions and feelings, and embrace their cultural values (e.g., avoiding confrontation and conflict in favor of maintaining relationships and respect) and make choices that support them.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

The curriculum develops and strengthens existing prosocial attitudes and behaviors, core resistance skills that are transferable to many other life situations.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION

The program helps to teach youth to live drug-free lives by drawing on their strengths and the strengths of their families and communities. Students are taught how to say no to substance use through practical, easy-to-remember and use strategies that are embodied in the acronym *REAL* (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave).

MEDIA/PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS

While it is an optional component, at several replication sites, program prevention messages and resistance strategies were reinforced in the community through television and radio public service announcements and billboards.

HOW IT WORKS

The program helps to teach youth to live drug-free lives by drawing on their strengths and the strengths of their families and communities. Students are taught how to say no to substance use through practical, easy-to-remember and -use strategies that are embodied in the acronym *REAL* (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave). Using *REAL* strategies, students learn how to recognize risk, value their perceptions and feelings, and embrace their cultural values (e.g., avoiding confrontation and conflict in favor of maintaining relationships and respect) and make choices that support them.

The curriculum is organized as ten 45- to 50-minute lessons. The program's key learning tool is a series of videos produced by youths, based on actual student experiences. The videos specifically demonstrate how students can use *REAL* strategies to resist drug use in real-life situations.

Distinct Mexican American, African American, and multicultural versions of *keepin' it REAL* were developed so that students can recognize themselves in the prevention message and can see solutions that are sensitive to their unique cultural environments:

Mexican-American—this culture-centered version was created with a focus on Latino values such as *familismo* (family orientation), *respeto* (respect), *personalismo* (personal treatment), and *simpatía* (niceness). For example, in Lesson 1 of the Mexican-American curriculum, the objective is for the student to:

- Recognize that what he or she does affects his or her community, group and family, and
- Differentiate between simple preference and “wise choice”—a choice that is **honorable** and can be **respected**.

Non-Latino—this version is a mainstream curriculum, taking values such as **goal orientation** and **individualism** from White and African American culture. For example, in Lesson 1 of the Black/White curriculum, the objective is for the student to:

- Recognize that what he or she does may have favorable or unfavorable consequences on his or her **future goals**, and
- Differentiate between simple preference and “wise choice”—a choice that helps the student to achieve his or her **personal goals**.

Multicultural—this version was developed by incorporating five lessons from each of the Mexican-American and non-Latino versions. For a large sample of Phoenix, Arizona, middle school students, the Multicultural version had the widest appeal and the highest level of effectiveness of the three versions.

To ensure the video material is relevant, has a realistic youth-centered message, and is engaging to young people, a creative team of students from Phoenix South Mountain High School developed, produced, and acted in the videos. Worksheets, games, role-play scenarios, and discussion materials also are used in the classroom lessons, and students receive homework materials as well.

One monthly booster session during the 8 months after completing the classroom-based intervention is recommended. In addition, while it is not a core component, at several replication sites, program prevention messages and resistance strategies were reinforced in the community through television and radio public service announcements and billboards.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Program success relies heavily on the acceptance and commitment of school leadership and staff to the importance of culturally relevant materials and approaches. Administrators and staff that have delivered *keepin' it REAL* acknowledged that increased cultural understanding positively influenced instructional planning and delivery in all subjects. The curriculum includes:

- **Teacher's Manual:** This manual provides teachers with a complete curriculum, including materials preparation instructions, implementation suggestions, and samples of all materials needed for each lesson.
 - **Educational videos:** Each curriculum manual is accompanied by a video that contains an introduction to the video components of the curriculum as well as a specific supplemental video segment for each of the four resistance strategies taught—Refuse, Explain, Avoid, and Leave.
 - **Worksheets:** Master documents of each worksheet, homework assignment sheet, and classroom activity record are included in the curriculum manual.
 - **Overhead transparencies and other instructional aids:** Instructional aides (e.g., transparencies, vocabulary lists, materials lists) for full implementation are included in the curriculum manual.
 - **Spanish-language materials:** All implementation materials are available in the regional Spanish most commonly spoken in the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico.
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OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE, REDUCTIONS IN NEGATIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS, IMPROVEMENTS IN POSITIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS, OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE

- 32% to 44% reduction in marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol use

REDUCTIONS IN NEGATIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS

- 29% to 34% decrease in intent to accept substances
- Reduction and cessation of substance use

IMPROVEMENTS IN POSITIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS

- 30% to 38% increase in knowledge about and negative attitude towards drug use
- Increased repertoire of resistance skills, more frequent use of those skills, and internalizing mediators of substance use such as highly developed and well-articulated personal antidrug norms
- Increased adoption of strategies to resist using alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana

OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

- Significantly less substance use, especially alcohol
- Retention of unfavorable attitudes against someone their age using substances
- Perception that their peers' increase in substance use experimentation was significantly less than previously believed

EVALUATION DESIGN

METHODOLOGIES USED TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAM:

The initial REAL evaluation was conducted over 48 months:

Year 1—stratified 35 sample schools by enrollment and ethnicity (percent Hispanic); used block randomization to assign to one of four conditions: Mexican American, Black/White, Multicultural, or Control.

Year 2—administered pre-intervention questionnaire to all participants (Wave 1), implemented the curriculum in seventh grade classes in treatment schools, followed by Wave 2 post-questionnaire. Teachers utilized English and/or Spanish materials, available with each version. During the summer, a bilingual television public service announcement and outdoor billboard campaign was conducted.

Year 3—delivered school-based booster sessions with students in the treatment schools; administered followup questionnaires (Wave 3) and final questionnaires (Wave 4) to students in all schools.

Wave 2, 3, and 4 questionnaires were administered 2, 8, and 14 months, respectively, after complete program implementation. The questionnaires utilized a three-form design that employed planned “missingness” to limit the number of items each individual student received in the questionnaire, while maximizing the total number of items included for analysis. At each Wave, students responded to the items used to obtain information about demographic characteristics: recent alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use; antidrug personal norms; descriptive norms; and intentions to accept substances.

DELIVERY SPECIFICATIONS

5–24 WEEKS

Amount of time required to deliver the program and obtain documented outcomes:

The curriculum is organized as ten 45- to 50-minute lessons that are taught over 4 months.

INTENDED SETTING

URBAN

The *keepin' it REAL* curriculum originally was targeted to a population of middle school adolescents in the urban Southwest who were considered to be at risk due to poverty and other factors such as immigration status, English acquisition, and acculturation stress. Replications have shown *REAL* to be effective within a range of school and agency settings for students 10 through 17 years of age.

Agencies and schools both in Arizona and in Texas have successfully implemented the program with a wide range of adolescents and youth. SCAN, Inc., in Laredo, TX (*borderlands* setting—Indicated population) and Youth, Etc., in Houston (*urban agency* setting—Selective and Indicated populations) have used the program and found it to be effective. In Arizona, Osborn ESD has replicated the program in its middle school (Universal population). Victory High School, a charter school (Selective population), and Gateway Elementary sixth grade (Universal population) have experienced successful implementations, as has the Florence Crittendon Center in Phoenix (Indicated population).

FIDELITY

Components that must be included in order to achieve the same outcomes cited by the developer:

Implementer training prior to implementation is required.

Optional components or strategies, and how they were determined to be optional:

Optional components include student incentives, implementer incentives, and an 18-month followup booster series commencing approximately 3 to 6 months following initial intervention. Although the original experiment implementation included these components in the longitudinal study and overall effects were greater in the original experiment that included these components, replication results have been positive for curriculum implementation only—implementations done without incentives or second-year boosters.

Fidelity Instruments:

Fidelity measures are available (i.e., teacher reflections on individual lessons and lesson observers' comments and critiques). Availability is part of the optional program evaluation technical support offered by the developer.

BARRIERS AND PROBLEMS

Key barriers and problems associated with the use of this Model Program and potential solutions:

Barrier: Because this program is culturally grounded, implementation training is essential to program implementation success. Small agencies/schools with very low funding and/or resources often find that startup costs—materials and training—may stretch funding allocations beyond their reach.

Solution/Suggestion: To resolve this conflict of purpose, funding should be provided based upon "equitable needs" rather than by "equal amounts" so that smaller entities are not punished for attending to the needs of isolated and/or rural populations.

Barrier: The most inequitable resource allocations are those with equal distributions, unencumbered by consideration of other limitations.

Solution/Suggestion: To alleviate this issue, State funding agencies must serve as brokers of communication connections and agency efforts rather than pursuing the course of "site-based" offerings that are less cost effective and more resource-draining than collective or collaborative efforts could be if coordinated through a "modified centralized" process.

Barrier: Although most externally funded agencies and schools are required to adopt a formal program evaluation, very few are allocated sufficient funds to contract with a third-party evaluator or to use the existing instrument for program evaluation at \$2 per student (pre- and posttest), or to contract for a full program evaluation, in general. This situation leads to agency/school frustration because the program developers have no funds available to use for dissemination efforts or to subsidize agency/school efforts to provide evidence-based prevention programming for their clients. It is a joint frustration.

Solution/Suggestion: Funding efforts may need to expand to include some form of corporate sponsorship specifically for those evaluative efforts. With SAMHSA evidence-based programs available, both school and private entities may be readily enlisted to support effective program evaluation. Boards of Education/Boards of Trustees are delighted to find out what works as well as what does not. Too often they are asked to approve adoption of programs from other places “on faith” that the program worked elsewhere. Without sufficient resources to prove program effectiveness in “their house,” the boards (and decisionmakers) are left with few options. Substance abuse is one of the biggest issues facing corporate employers; sponsorship of prevention program evaluations should be pursued as offering both short- and long-term benefits for their communities.

Barrier: Legislative mandates regarding language use in teaching.

Solution: In those “English only” situations, we have encouraged implementers to use the Spanish language materials to bridge the communication barriers between the agency/school and the home and/or between their organizations and the communities within which the clients live and work.

PERSONNEL

FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, PAID, VOLUNTEER

The people who interact most directly and most often with students are the ones who should be trained as implementers. Those who have “instant credibility” with students, because of their positions, should be trained so that the message is consistent for all clients. Someone specifically trained to prepare implementers to deliver this curriculum should provide training.

Typical personnel problems encountered by users when implementing this Model Program, and potential solutions:

We have not encountered personnel problems, *per se*. We have found that implementers in all settings are eager to learn about the cultural grounding of instruction and interactions.

EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL, UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE

All types of implementers have been trained to deliver *REAL*, including certified teachers and licensed agency personnel, street kids in urban settings, adults from all types of backgrounds who are mentoring youth, school and agency administrators, and prevention coordinators. In all instances, trainees have said that the curriculum is exceptionally “user friendly” for implementers.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

TYPE: SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS, LOCATION: ONSITE (OF USER), LENGTH: BASIC

A 2-day, intensive training is required of all implementers. The training sessions are highly interactive, facilitative in nature, and include both learning and practice. A contracted professional development specialist conducts the training; each of the training days is approximately 7 hours in length. Training is usually conducted onsite at the agency/school and can include a maximum of 25 implementers per training class. Implementers receive program materials on the day of training.

COST (ESTIMATED IN U.S. DOLLARS)

\$1,001–\$5,000

Cost considerations for implementing this program as recommended by the developer:

BUDGET COSTS:

Program Evaluation Components (optional)

Survey	\$2 per student/client
Data Input	\$2,550 per site for each implementation period
Data Analysis and Final Evaluation Report	\$7,500 per site for each implementation period

Other budget costs may be calculated by using the information below to design a tailored implementation for an agency or school.

TRAINING COSTS:

Implementer Training (required) \$4,000

A 2-day, onsite training is required for effective use of the program. This is an essential element because of the use of the culturally grounded considerations—a different approach from most existing programs. When considering school implementation, the classroom teacher should be the implementer (rather than an external third-party) because of his or her credibility with the students. Strategy-driven incentives are good reinforcement of the resistance skills being taught, but are not required for positive program effects.

Training of Trainers (optional) \$8,000

(TOT training requires 2 days in addition to the implementer training, a total of 4 days.)

MATERIALS COSTS:

Implementer’s Curriculum (required) \$90 plus shipping

Includes notebook and accompanying video—contains everything needed to deliver the program.

OTHER:

Replacement products (worksheets, transparencies, videos, etc.) may be ordered. All products needed for implementation are included in the Materials Costs section.

INTENDED AGE GROUP

EARLY ADOLESCENT (12–14)

This program is intended for use with early adolescents and teenagers 10 to 17 years of age. However, NREPP* reviewed evaluations of studies conducted with 8th graders. (The curriculum was implemented in 7th grade and continued via a booster series in 8th grade.)

Agencies and schools both in Arizona and in Texas (approved by Texas Council on Alcohol and Drug Addiction—TCADA) have successfully implemented the program with a wide range of adolescents and youth. SCAN, Inc., in Laredo, TX (*borderlands* setting—Indicated population) and Youth, Etc., in Houston (*urban agency* setting—Selected and Indicated populations) have used the program and found it to be effective. In Arizona, Osborn ESD has replicated the program in its middle school (Universal population). Victory High School, a charter school (Selected population), and Gateway Elementary 6th grade (Universal population) have experienced successful implementations, as has the Florence Crittendon Center in Phoenix (Indicated population).

INTENDED POPULATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN, AMERICAN INDIAN, HISPANIC/LATINO, WHITE

African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino (Mexican American and Mexican immigrant), and White populations.

GENDER

BOTH GENDERS

Program can be used with both genders.

REPLICATIONS

Agencies and schools both in Arizona and in Texas have successfully implemented the program with a wide range of adolescents and youth. SCAN, Inc., in Laredo, TX (*borderlands* setting), and Youth, Etc., in Houston (*urban agency* setting) have used the program and found it to be effective. In Arizona, Osborn ESD has replicated the program in its middle school. Victory High School, a charter school, and Gateway Elementary 6th grade have experienced successful implementations, as has the Florence Crittendon Center in Phoenix.

CONTACT INFORMATION

School Setting:

Osborn Elementary School District
Anne Marie Cardinal, Prevention Coordinator
Phoenix, AZ
E-mail: acardinal@osborn.net
Phone: (602) 707-2000

Agency Setting

SCAN, Inc.
Christopher Craddock, Executive Director
Laredo, TX
E-mail: chris@scan-inc.org
Phone: (956) 724-3177

ADAPTATIONS

NO INFORMATION PROVIDED

CONTACT INFORMATION

ABOUT THE DEVELOPERS:

Michael Hecht, Ph.D.

Dr. Michael Hecht is a professor of communication arts and sciences at Penn State University. Dr. Hecht received his doctorate in 1976 from University of Illinois. His wide range of publications on adolescent substance use includes his recent book, *Adolescent Relationships and Drug Use*. Dr. Hecht's long association with NIDA has resulted in successful school-based interventions for high school and middle school students, including the Drug Resistance Strategies project. He has participated in the design and evaluation of culture-based drug treatment programs and writes extensively about identity and interethnic communication.

Flavio Francisco Marsiglia, Ph.D.

Dr. Flavio Francisco Marsiglia, a 1991 graduate of Case Western Reserve University, is an associate professor of social work and Director of the National Institutes of Health/NIDA-funded Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Consortium at Arizona State University. Dr. Marsiglia specializes in drug-abuse and HIV prevention with an emphasis on Hispanic/Latino populations in geographical context and intragroup relations. Dr. Marsiglia serves as the principal investigator of the Arizona-based research team for the Drug Resistance Strategies project and currently is conducting field-based research on drug-abuse prevention in Monterrey, Mexico. Dr. Marsiglia has published numerous articles on drug abuse prevention and is principal author of an upcoming book entitled *Culturally-Grounded Social Work*.

For information, contact:

Patricia Dustman, Ed.D.
Arizona State University
School of Social Work
Phone: (480) 965-4699
E-mail: patricia.dustman@asu.edu

Michael Hecht, Ph.D.
Pennsylvania State University
234 Sparks Building
University Park, PA 16802-5201
Phone: (814) 863-3545
E-mail: mlh10@psu.edu

Flavio Marsiglia, Ph.D.
Arizona State University
Box 873711
Tempe, AZ 85287-3711
Phone: (480) 965-6185
E-mail: marsiglia@asu.edu